Tips & Expectations for PILI Interns

PILI's Law Student Internship Program reflects the heart of our mission, to engage, inspire and empower those advancing equal access to justice. The value of a PILI Internship can be both personal and professional as you experience the world of legal aid, expand your network and gain practical legal skills. At the same time, there are certain expectations of PILI Interns that can help you make the most of this valuable experience**.**

1. **Ask for help.** If you're not sure how to do an assignment, don't be afraid to ask for additional resources**.** You could ask for an example or template of a given assignment or ask for recommendations of people to speak with who have worked on similar projects.

2. **Ask for feedback.** Meet regularly with your supervisor(s) to ensure that everyone's expectations are being met. This is a good way for you to get feedback on your performance and will help to keep you on track with current and future assignments. Contact PILI staff immediately if feedback is not occurring, or if you have any issues with your supervision or Internship generally.

3. **Take initiative.** Look for opportunities to further your education. If there is a project that interests you, ask your supervisor if you can help out. While working on projects, ask questions and do not hesitate to speak up if you need guidance or clarity. Attend PILI's weekly programming for Interns and Fellows on a variety of public interest law topics. These sessions provide a great opportunity to learn more about public interest law and to meet like-minded individuals working at a vast array of organizations.

4. **Seize the opportunity to learn.** The staff of your agency are seasoned and skilled in the legal areas in which they practice and in serving their client population. Ask them about their own careers. How did they get into the field? What do they like about it? What do they find challenging?

5. **Engage with your agency.** Attend meetings and events, as appropriate, in order to learn from and meet people in the legal aid community. As you continue your career, the PILI Alumni Network and the public interest community more broadly can be a valuable asset.

6. **Ask for advice.** Talk to agency staff about your career plans, and let them know you're open to advice, both now and in the future. They can be helpful by sharing job leads, recommending you for a job, and suggesting various volunteer/pro bono opportunities.

7. **Build your portfolio and reputation**. Ask your supervisor if you can keep writing samples you have written, and any other type of work that may embody skills you may want to represent in the future. Remember, the Illinois legal community may be large in size, but it is well connected, so be mindful that your work and reputation as an Intern will follow you.

8. **Keep in touch.** Consciously pick out one or two people you especially connect with and plan to maintain ties. Ask them to coffee or lunch, attend events hosted by their agency, engage in pro bono work with them and send occasional emails with useful information. They may end up being very valuable to your career.

9. **Understand your workplace culture.** Be aware of the culture and expectations of your agency, so that you can better understand the organizational structure and communicate effectively. You, just like those on staff, will often have to provide your own administrative support. If you have questions about workplace culture, your supervisor is the best reference point for this information.

10. **Practice client cultural sensitivity.** Interns should be aware of, and responsive to, the cultural and demographic diversity of the population served by the agency, and communicate effectively within the clients' cultural context. Race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, disability and socio-economic status all impact our attitudes, perceptions and reactions – both from the client side and from the attorney side. Ask questions, for training or shadow agency attorneys, if needed.

11. **Evaluate Your Experience.** All Interns are required to complete two service tracking forms and an overall evaluation. PILI relies heavily on this information to improve the Internship Program, and to provide required information to our funders. You will receive more information about the service tracking form and the evaluation from PILI at the beginning of your Internship.

Expectations of Your Host Agency

As a PILI Intern, you can expect your host agency to:

- Identify a supervisor who is an attorney;
- Orient you to the workings of your agency and train you on substantive and administrative tasks;
- Assign you work that furthers your practical legal knowledge and that is appropriate for a law school student;
- Provide ongoing guidance and feedback throughout the Internship;
- Integrate you into the agency's structure and decision making, where appropriate;
- Allow you time to attend programming through PILI's Educational Seminar Series;
- Provide you with an appropriate workspace; and
- Treat you with respect and as a valued member of the agency's staff.

Additional information about PILI's Internship Program, including information about our Summer Educational Seminar Series, can also be found on our website at www.pili.org/internships.

We hope you have a terrific experience as a PILI Intern and we look forward to meeting you! Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions at intenships@pili.org.